

# TRACKS & TRAILS

A monthly newsletter for employees of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

"To manage and conserve the natural and cultural resources of Texas and to provide hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

March 2010

## Interagency wildland fire training heats up

The TPWD State Parks Division is collaborating with the Texas Forest Service (TFS) to offer three Wildland Firefighter Training Exchanges at state parks this January through March. Two exchanges have been completed to date, and the third is being held Feb. 28–Mar. 6. As the collaboration develops, the trainings may be opened up to additional agencies in years to come.

The idea for the training exchange arose last year when State Parks Wildland Fire Program Manager Jeff Sparks was visiting with TFS Mitigation and Prevention Coordinator Rich Gray. Jeff explains, "We were discussing how we could better provide training and experience opportunities to inexperienced firefighters, and also training opportunities to firefighters working to increase their firefighter qualification levels."

Based on a model used by The Nature Conservancy, the week-long trainings paired wildland firefighters from the two agencies with mentors who provided hands-on training and fire experience. Participants were fully engaged in putting fires on the ground, and spent time in the classroom covering agency policy and procedures as well as topics such as fire history, fire effects and ecology, fire line safety, firing techniques, and fire in the wildland-urban interface.

The training exchanges are operated under the Incident Command System (ICS) structure, with Jeff and Rich as co-incident commanders. ICS is an emergency response system that was developed more than 30 years ago in the aftermath of large-scale wildfires in California. Participants come away with a better understanding of ICS, which will allow staff from both agencies to better utilize ICS in future emergency situations, such as Hurricanes Rita and Ike response.

The training exchanges are one of the means by which the State Parks Wildland Fire Program supports Land and Water Plan action items aimed at maintaining healthy terrestrial ecosystems. Prescribed burning is an effective way to foster habitat diversity by reducing invasive or undesirable plant species and promoting native grasses and forbs that have been overtaken by the more dominant species.

— Karen Blizzard



Chris Dooley (Guadalupe River SP) sets a strip head-fire during a Wildland Firefighter Training Exchange at Purvis Creek SP last month.

JEFF SPARKS

## New Texas State Parks Web site debuts this month

"New and improved!" While this phrase might be one of the most overused advertising gimmicks, where Texas State Parks' online presence is concerned, it most certainly applies. Just in time for the busy spring camping season, persons seeking information about their favorite Texas state parks on the TPWD Web site will be redirected to a new, redesigned online resource to help them plan their visits. Thanks to a year-long effort by the State Parks, Communications, and Information Technology divisions, a new Web site dedicated solely to the 93 Texas state parks operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department goes online this month.

TPWD's March launch of [www.texasstateparks.org](http://www.texasstateparks.org) is in large part a response to last year's online survey of 3,000 visitors to the agency's parks pages. Survey respondents made it clear that they seek more useful state park information online and want the pages to be more visually appealing.

"The on-site visitor research reinforced the importance of the Web site by showing that it was the most influential source of information, other than word of mouth, in motivating someone to visit a park," said TPWD

continued on page 4

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER



### Dear Colleagues:

In February, the Life's Better Outside campaign took its show on the road with the launch of the first of a series of four major outreach events around Texas. The events, designed to mimic (albeit at a smaller scale) our longstanding Austin Expo event, are scheduled for four Texas communities this year—San Antonio, Houston, Corpus Christi and Longview. Thanks to our first host, the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo, along with our primary partner, the Texas Wildlife Association, and the efforts of numerous TPWD colleagues and volunteers, the inaugural event was an unqualified success.

Over the course of a Saturday and Sunday thousands of visitors, particularly families, were treated to a "mini-Expo" on the rodeo grounds. Within our display area visitors could try their hands at archery, camping, casting, plant/animal/shell identification, rock climbing, apprehending poachers in faux deer camps and much more. While there, they had a chance to meet and visit with an array of fisheries and wildlife biologists, game wardens, park rangers, and outreach and interpretive specialists. They were also exposed to key departmental programs like the Buffalo Soldiers, Big Game Awards, Operation Game Thief, and Take Me Fishing.

My wife and I had the pleasure of herding two of our godchildren, ages four and six, through the exhibits on Saturday. After several hours of slinging rods and arrows, climbing the rocks, sorting through the skins and shells, playing with the habitat puzzle, and learning about what game wardens look for when checking deer camps, the boys acted like they could go on forever. After considerable "persuasion," we finally got them outside the tents to return them to their parents. In parting, my wife asked them what part of the Life's Better Outside exhibit they liked best. Both grinned from ear to ear and said in unison, "All of it." Success!

Onward to Houston.

Speaking of changes in longstanding departmental communication initiatives, **this will be the last edition of *Tracks & Trails*, at least in name and format.** As most of you know, we made a decision some months ago to transition this key internal communication medium to a paperless product. After first transitioning to this electronic format, we are now ready to capitalize on multimedia technology to improve this important internal communication tool. As such, we will now offer a more interactive, online, multimedia format for colleagues to read and learn about key agency matters.

The new name for our online publication will be *Inside Track*. It will make its debut in April. After seeing and reading it, please give our team in Communications your appraisal of what you like about it and what you think needs improving. This communications tool is there for your benefit to help stay abreast of key department-wide matters, and we want to make sure it is working as intended. Until then, happy reading.

Thanks for all you do for Texas' wild things and wild places and for those who use and care about them. They need you more than ever.

Carter Smith

## TRACKS & TRAILS

Published on the Web by Texas Parks and Wildlife's Communications Division for employees and retirees throughout the state. We welcome submissions for publication, but reserve the right to edit or screen materials according to newsletter policy. All submissions for the newsletter are due by the last working day of each month. Address submissions to **Karen Blizzard, Communications Division, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744; E-mail [karen.blizzard@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:karen.blizzard@tpwd.state.tx.us).**

### Editorial Team:

Lydia Saldaña-----Communications Director  
Karen Blizzard-----Editor  
Chase A. Fountain-----Photo Editor

Suzanne Davis-----Design Layout  
Carol Otto-----Proofing/Production  
Coordinator

## KUDOS

The Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society held its annual meeting at the Richard M. Hart and Johnny Morris Conservation Center at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens, Jan. 21-23. At the awards dinner, the following Inland Fisheries staff members received awards for "Outstanding Fisheries Worker of the Year" for 2009:

- Outstanding Fisheries Worker of the Year Award in Culture – **Hugh Glenewinkel**
- Outstanding Fisheries Worker of the Year Award – Special Recognition – **Mandy Scott**
- Outstanding Fisheries Worker of the Year Award in Management – **Richard Ott**
- Outstanding Fisheries Worker of the Year Award in Administration – **Mike Ray**
- Outstanding Fisheries Worker of the Year Award in Research – **Aaron Barkoh**

In addition, the award for Best Professional Poster was presented to Bill Balboa, Brenda Bowling, and Mike Stahl for "A preliminary assessment of oyster reef and shoreline habitat use by estuarine finfish in East Matagorda Bay and Galveston Bay, Texas."

## Farewell, Tracks & Trails. ... Inside Track coming in April

As times change, so do publications. With a mix of nostalgia and anticipation, we announce that this is the final issue of *Tracks & Trails*. It is moving to a new online format and will re-launch in April as *Inside Track*, a WILDnet-based, multimedia employee communiqué. *Tracks & Trails* is a legacy TPWD publication that has been produced monthly since the late 1960s. With *Inside Track* we will build on that history, using the latest technology to provide information of interest to agency employees. Visit WILDnet in April to get the *Inside Track*!

## HR POLICY CORNER

### Workplace Fraud

Fraud generally involves a willful or deliberate act with the intention of obtaining an unauthorized benefit, such as money or property, by deception or other means. Examples of fraudulent acts include, but are not limited to: theft, embezzlement, forgery or alteration of documents, misappropriation of funds, property or supplies. The agency has a zero-tolerance policy for such acts which may have been committed in the scope of an individual's employment responsibilities or involving assets under the agency's ownership or control. Any employee engaging in fraudulent activities will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Suspected fraudulent activities should be reported to the Internal Affairs Section.





## Rubber ducky, you're so fine

More than water was flowing at the Friends of McKinney Falls' first annual McKinney Falls Duck Dash on Saturday, February 20. Participants sent approximately 77 rubber ducks cascading over the falls after buying them for \$5 each in a "rubber duck raffle." The Friends group held the competition to benefit their efforts at McKinney Falls State Park. Filipe Camacho was declared the winner of the Duck Dash when his duck made it over the falls first.



SHANE MOONEYHAM

## "Hats Off" to SP meeting organizers

Members of the State Parks "Hat Team," a group made up of staff from parks and regional offices throughout the state, pose at the end of the annual State Parks conference, which was held Feb. 2-4 at Corpus Christi's Omni Bayfront Hotel. The team coordinated all of the logistics, lodging, food and other arrangement details for the recent three-day conference. More than 300 TPWD interdivisional staff attended the conference, which featured speakers, seminars and even a tour and dinner at the Texas State Aquarium.



BRYAN FRAZIER

## Hello, Salvinia ... Goodbye, Texas lakes

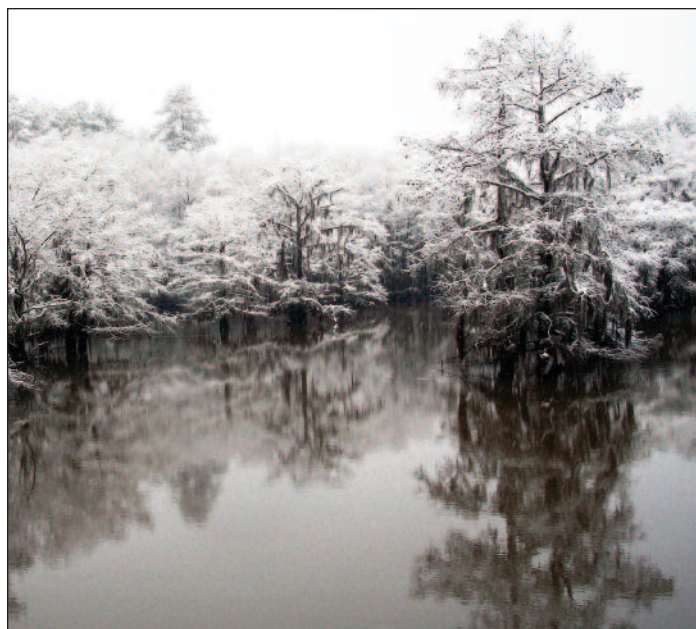
The Giant Salvinia Monster made an appearance at the January TPW Commission meeting during the Outreach and Education Committee briefing on a multimedia campaign on invasive species that will launch in April. TPWD has determined that giant salvinia will be the first invasive species focus of the campaign, which is being coordinated by the Communications Division marketing group and the Sherry Matthews advertising agency.



CHASE A. FOUNTAIN

## Winter at Caddo Lake

Snowfall in February turned Caddo Lake State Park into a winter wonderland throughout the park and surrounding area. This picture was taken from the pier looking southwest.



TODD DICKINSON



# MILESTONES



## NEW EMPLOYEES

### COMMUNICATIONS

**Michael Cox**  
Info. Spec. V, Austin  
**Michael Finney**  
Web Adm. II, Austin  
**Scott Haydon**  
Web Adm. II, Austin  
**Russell Roe**  
Info. Spec. IV, Austin

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Chad Leno**  
Maint. Tech. III, Austin  
**Jose Rodriguez-Alvarez**  
Project Mgr. I, Austin  
**Lawrence Terrazas**  
Maint. Tech. II, Tyler

### INLAND FISHERIES

**Toni Oldfather**  
SSO V, Austin  
**Joseph Smith**  
NRS II, Mountain Home

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

Game Warden Trainee:  
**Benjamin Bailey**  
**Gerald Bailey**  
**Andrew Banda**  
**Adam Broll**  
**Steven Cantu**  
**Bradley Clark**  
**Hallie Dacy**  
**Chelsea Estrada**  
**Christopher Frey**  
**Crystal Hoppe**  
**Ryan Hunter**  
**Kenneth Isaacs**  
**Daniel Kessler**  
**Richard Key**  
**Matthew Kiel**  
**Shannon Kruse**  
**Phillip Ledoux**  
**Lawrence Lewis**  
**Matthew Marek**  
**Jacob Mort**  
**Mark Nelson**  
**Bryan Newman**  
**William Nicholson**  
**Phillip Noack**  
**Jerry Norris**  
**Patricia O'Neill**  
**Anh Phan**  
**Tristan Pokorney**  
**Eric Posern**  
**Robin Pugh**  
**Harry Rakosky**  
**James Reasoner**  
**Tyler Reed**  
**Brandon Rose**  
**Joshua Ross**  
**Isaac Ruiz**  
**Desirae Salcido**  
**Ashley Sanchez**  
**Jamie Sanchez**  
**Sam Smith**  
**Thomas Sparkmann III**  
**David Thorne**  
**David Vannoy**  
**Brandon West**

**Charles Westerman**  
**Kenneth Zuber**

### STATE PARKS

**Donald Allen**  
Park Rgr. III, Johnson City  
**Enrique Gonzales III**  
Park Rgr. I, Weslaco  
**Reynaldo Infante, Jr.**  
Park Spec. I, Laredo  
**Cathy Ivie**  
Clerk I, Meridian  
**Adam James**  
Park Spec. I, Denison  
**Eleanor Maynarich**  
Clerk I, Fort Davis  
**Claudia Tamez**  
Park Rgr. IV, Olmito

### WILDLIFE

**Ryan Darr**  
NRS I, Pleasanton  
**Sean Kyle**  
Prog. Spec. V, Lubbock

## UP THE LADDER

### COASTAL FISHERIES

**Robin Riechers**  
Mgr. V to Div. Dir. III  
**Jennie Rohrer**  
NRS I to NRS II

### EXECUTIVE OFFICE

**Michael Hardison**  
Auditor IV to Auditor V

### HUMAN RESOURCES

**Yaddira Careaga**  
HR Spec. II to HR Spec. III  
**Sarah Holmes**  
HR Spec. I to HR Spec. II

### INLAND FISHERIES

**Marcos De Jesus**  
NRS III to NRS IV  
**Ryan Fontana**  
F&WT I to F&WT II  
**Jimmie Green**  
Adm. Asst. IV to SSO I  
**Michael Pereira**  
F&WT II to F&WT III  
**John Provine**  
F&WT I to F&WT II

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

**Lori Brock**  
AA III to AA IV

### STATE PARKS

**Gregory Dillon**  
Park Spec. III to Mgr. II  
**Jeannie Humphrey**  
Clerk I to Clerk II  
**Randall Killham**  
AA I to AA II  
**Raquel Quesada**  
AA II to AA III  
**Gloria Ray**  
Clerk I to Clerk II  
**Shannon Roysden**  
Clerk I to AA II

**Randall Smith**  
Park Rgr. II to Park Rgr. V  
**Kimberly Vaughn**  
Clerk II to AA II  
**Hector Villanueva**  
Clerk I to Clerk II

## SERVICE AWARDS

### 5 YEARS

**Vanessa Adams, Wild.**  
**Linda Bergmann, AR**  
**Joy Compton, AR**  
**Verna Dutchover, SP**  
**J. Leigh Erlanson, SP**  
**Sylvia Escalante, SP**  
**Gwen Fuqua, SP**  
**Tonya Hammonds, SP**  
**Steven Hann, SP**  
**Diamantina Ibarra, SP**  
**Praveen Kakkanti, IF**  
**Stacey Lake, SP**  
**Meredith Longoria, Wild.**  
**Diana Mayo, Wild.**  
**Donna Nelson, AR**  
**Bradley Ringo, AR**  
**Nancy Thomas, SP**  
**Garnet Trahan, SP**

### 10 YEARS

**Linda Barnett, SP**  
**Shawn Bengtson, SP**  
**Jeffrey Bonner, Wild.**  
**Alan Cain, Wild.**  
**Frederick Ensinger, LE**  
**Michael Golen, IT**  
**Reynaldo Guevara, SP**  
**Steven Hise, IF**  
**Antone Jackson II, LE**  
**Melissa Martinez, SP**  
**Charles McDougall, IF**  
**Randall Myers, IF**  
**Peggy Osborne, Wild.**  
**Debbie Pfullman, AR**  
**Austin Vieh, SP**  
**Adam Whisenant, CF**

### 15 YEARS

**Lusita Castillo, SP**  
**Robert Davis II, SP**  
**Lori Kreitner, IT**  
**Phillip Plata, SP**  
**Marie Posey, SP**  
**Elishea Smith, Wild.**

### 20 YEARS

**Patricia Clifton, LE**  
**Louis Duncan, SP**  
**Kimberly Gribben, LE**  
**Michael Mayo, IF**  
**Lydia Saldaña, Comm.**  
**Norman Snipe, SP**  
**Susana Taylor, SP**

## RETIREMENTS

**Richard Easter, SP, 5 years**  
**Donnie Ickles, SP, 3 years**  
**Michael McGuire, IT, 4 years**  
**Niki Nichols, HR, 10 years**  
**Ted Tolle, LE, 19 years**

## New state park Web site...

continued from page 1

Marketing Director Darcy Bontempo. "We all felt a redesigned Web site was a necessary foundation for more effective marketing of state parks."

A cross-divisional team worked closely together on this massive project. Phil Plata, Bryan Frazier and Chris Holmes from the State Parks Division, and Communications Division personnel including Robert Timbrook and his Interactive Services team, Marketing staff and TPWD photographers Earl Nottingham and Chase Fountain were the key players in getting the project finished.

The result is the creation of a separate, interactive Web site with detailed information about TPWD's 93 state parks, historic sites and natural areas. Online visitors now will find new photos and multimedia features, such as 360-degree virtual tours of park facilities, and a Google Map search feature. Links are provided to Facebook, YouTube and other social media Web sites. These new features will help create a community of park users that can post and share their own videos, photos and comments. Park staff will also be able to use Twitter to provide conversational, timely updates to visitors on everything from park closings to wildflower reports from their mobile phones or computers.

During a presentation to more than 300 employees attending the Texas State Parks conference in Corpus Christi last month, TPWD Marketing Coordinator Carly Drees presented a sneak preview of what the public will see when they log onto the new Web site.

Web users clicking on the State Parks & Destinations button on the TPWD Web site will be redirected to the redesigned Texas State Parks "landing page." The main parks page features a captivating park image and a variety of search options allowing an individual to make a park reservation, look up a specific park event, find a special deal, volunteer, read the latest state parks news or "Find A Park."

Each state park has its own redesigned main page that will include a park video, photographs, and some also feature a virtual tour. Eventually all parks will have virtual tours as staff photographers continue to make use of new virtual photography equipment that was purchased for this project. The main page also has a "positioning statement," which is a verbal snapshot of the park's unique features. Users can also navigate to the park's sub-pages to access additional information about fees and facilities, nature and history and a variety of other information. A reservations button is also prominently featured on each page.

Web site enhancements will continue after the launch, with more detailed park content, suggested itineraries, *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine and *Passport to Texas* radio stories about each park, and park-specific "frequently asked questions."

— Rob McCorkle

## TRAINING CALENDAR

Check the current training schedule online at <https://WILDnet.tpwd.state.tx.us/ir/cs/train/calendar.phtml> or contact Andra Clark, technical trainer, at (512) 389-4782 for more information.